

had almost said claim) Mercy from God, and deserve Pity from Men. We know very well that every Man's Body is in so perpetual a Flux, that about the space of seven years, renders him wholly and intirely another corporeal Substance from what he was before, the whole Mass both of Accidents and Matter being thrust away by the continual Succession of new ones: and yet because the Soul remains still the same, and retains all the while the same Power and uninterrupted Government over the whole Succession, we justly esteem it the same Person; nay every part of him to be always so truly the same, that at any time of his Life he may say, With these Eyes I shall behold my Saviour, tho' the Accidents and very Matter of them be so often chang'd. Such an Identity as this is requisite to a Man's Faith: he may now be fully a Papist, and seven years hence fully a Protestant, and yet his Faith still remain the same; because it is all the while actuated and mov'd by the same Soul of Faith, which is Conscience; which if he preserve inviolably, both when he was a Papist, and when he is a Protestant, he may truly say, With this very Faith I shall behold my Saviour.

But suppose this so exalted Guide of yours, your own Conscience, shou'd direct you to forsake your Christian Belief; for which the Devil does not want such pleasant Colours and specious Fallacys, as may possibly deceive even a good Understanding.

Before I answer this Objection, I desire to know of him that makes it, what it is (for something it must be) which he places in the same Ecclesiastical Superiority that I do Reason? The private Spirit. What if that shou'd persuade him to this Apostacy? It cannot, not indeed if it be true. But the same Condition will make Reason as infallible as that; and I may as well judg of the Truth of the one, as you of the other.

What is it then you will trust your Soul with, in this important Business? It is the Authority of Men. These verily may lead you into Error, and it is not impossible, into the greatest and worst of all, which is the Desertion of Christ himself: not that this is likely to happen, neither more probable is it, that our Reason shou'd so far misguide us. But alas! in this Affair of so vast and so eternal Consequence, what Security can we assume, whilst there remains a possibility of Miscarriage? And this Possibility is evident: for let us consider it in a Council; which, if there be any assurance in the number of Men, is that where most probably it may be found. I will not here reckon up the many Errors which great and famous Councils have fallen into themselves, and labour'd to establish in others, they are many and notorious. But certainly

certainly if a Council cou'd take away the Satisfaction of Christ's Death, and Divinity of his Person (as was done by that great one of the *Arians* which condemn'd *Athanasius*, not without the Approbation of the Pope and the whole World besides) a Council has already done that thing, which you affirm impossible for it to do. For they who believ'd Christ to come into the World as an Example and Pattern only of Holiness, are no more to be call'd Christians, than *Abrahamists* or *Davidists*. If you will here contend, that even these Men deserted not wholly Christianity, as a Man may do by the Impulsion of his own private Reason; yet certainly you will confess that they who fell so far into Error, might as well have sunk deeper, and exalted some other Prophet above Christ, as well as make Christ to be but a Prophet. And this possibility of Error (even in so high a degree) we shall find in the Nature and very Elements of a Council; for if any one Member of it may be a Heathen or Atheist in Opinion (as the Lives of many Popes, and the Speeches of some, declare that they themselves have been) why not two, not three, not more, not the major part; that is, the whole Council? From the Sanctions of the $\frac{3}{4}$ *Nicene* Council, which establish'd the Worship of Images, how easy a step was there made for the next? to the Introduction of a full, undisguis'd and Heathenish Idolatry, which we must not say could not, because by the Mercy of God it did not happen. And I verily believe, if God had not stir'd up some Persons of excellent Abilitys and worthy Spirits (for such sure they were, tho not exempt from human Weaknesses) to examine by the Rules of their own Reasons, those Follies and dangerous Errors in Religion, which partly by the Interest, partly by the Ignorance of Men, and insensible Advances of ill Custom, were blindly embrac'd by the whole World: If these Men, I say, had not discover'd the past Errors, and by that means made their Adversarys more cautious not to fall into any new ones, the World thro the Adoration of Saints and Images, and the boundless Increase of vain and superstitious Ceremonys, would have past before this time to its old and abominable Worship of several Deities, and to a Religion overwhelm'd, if not with the same, yet with as many and as vain Impietys. It remains therefore, that you put your Confidence rather in the Traditions of the former, than the Commands of the present Church. But what those were, you must either trust some number of Men present, which is not without the possibility of being misguided; or your own Search and Diligence, which is to fall into that Opinion which you condemn in me. And truly they who build their Belief wholly upon the Authority of past or pre-

sent Ages, if they look upon all the Consequences of that Opinion, are in much greater danger of being drawn from the Christian Faith, than those who remit the Judgment of these things to their own Reason: For ever since the beginning of the Christian Belief, there has been the Authority of above an hundred to one against it; and this Authority back'd and strengthen'd with the universal Agreement of more than three thousand years before it. But on the contrary, if we weigh impartially the Motives and Arguments which every Religion can produce in its own defence; Reason it self will find more and much greater for the Christian, than it can for any other Belief whatsoever: And I am very confident, that no man ever from a Christian became a Turk or a Jew, because his Reason told him that was a better Religion; but because either Fear of Punishment or Hope of Reward, or some other sinister Cause, persuaded his Reason, that the worst Religion in it self, would be the better to him upon those Conditions.

Now all those Arguments, by which some men have labour'd to prove, that our Guide in Spiritual matters ought to be Infallible, tho they be granted for true, as I believe in some sense they are, will not at all dispossess Reason of this Authority, which we have declar'd to be her due. For the Infallibility of a Guide I conceive to be only this, That it cannot fail to bring us to that end, for which we chose to be guided by it; and if to this end there happen to be a thousand several ways, it is a Guide no less infallible as to the End, if it lead us thro a long, an unpleasent and obscure Tract, than if it conducted us by a short, a delightful, and an open Road: for not the Goodness of the Passage, but Certainty of not missing the End, is that which constitutes this kind of Infallibility. And truly every Man's particular Reason, if well follow'd (for whatsoever Guide you pitch upon, whether Scripture, Spirit, Church past or present, or any thing else imaginable, must have that condition annex'd, or else it will become unprofitable) will infallibly carry him at last, tho perhaps thro many tedious and troublesom Wandrings, to his eternal Happiness if it be follow'd (for that Condition cannot be repeated too often) with Constancy, Diligence and Sobriety.

This Doctrine sets the great Gate of Heaven so wide open, that it will displease those Men, who with an envious kind of Pride, think it more Honour to enter in with a few at a narrow Wicket. But I truly, out of an humble Consideration of my own Weakness, and the general Imbecillity of human Nature, should still lament and tremble, that the Entrances to Heaven are so few and so difficult, tho they were yet far more and much easier than this Opinion makes them. There
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are enow Obstructions from the Frailty of our Flesh, the Subtilty of the Devil, the Tyranny of our Passions, and the perverse Crookedness of our corrupted Wills, without the Additions of any more from the Imperfections of our Intellect. Sufficient is the danger we run, in not performing those Duties which we understand aright, without making our Misunderstandings damnable, and condemning that as a Guilt, which is to be pity'd as a Misfortune. What then.? Shall we believe *Turks, Jews, Heathens, Atheists* themselves (if there be any such) in an equal possibility of Salvation with the unerring Christian? Shall we save all Beasts, of what kind soever, clean or unclean, in that mystical Ark, the Church of God? Certainly in the two contrary Excesses of Belief in this matter, that on the side of Mercy hath the appearance of greater Safety; and I had rather think with *Origen*, *That the Devils themselves, by the excessive Kindness of their Judg, shall at last be exempted from Damnation, than that he himself shall be damn'd for that Opinion.* But as to this their Objection, I believe first, That Reason it self will declare to every Man in the World, that he ought to adhere to the Christian, rather than to any other Religion whatsoever, if all things be propounded to him in a clear and impartial manner: and this whosoever shall deny, I dare confidently affirm, it is impossible for him to be a Christian. But because there are a thousand Accidents, which hinder the greatest part of the World from the Advantages of so fair a Proposal, hence it comes to pass, that so small a part of Mankind hath submitted to the Obedience of the Christian Faith. Now to condemn all those Millions of Persons (many Millions for one that is to be saved) is so wild an Uncharitableness, that few have been so barbarously severe, as to be guilty of it: and therefore those whose Ignorance in these matters has been invincible, they left to the hands of God, without declaring a definitive Opinion either of their Safety or Perdition. Now if we consider rightly, what Ignorance is to be accounted invincible, we shall by this means restore the greatest part of Mankind into a hopeful and comfortable Condition: and none even amongst the worst Religions will be left to a certain Ruin, but such whose Consciences have been neglected, or forc'd aside, by those who ought to have been guided by them; and such who can have no Plea against the Rigour of their Sentence, because they deserted themselves as well as God. And the Disobedience of Men to their own Conscience, is not only in things of Practice, but also of Belief and Speculation, tho not in so evident and immediate a manner, by suffering themselves to be deceiv'd by the insensible Operations of Interest and Prejudice.

Nor does it follow from hence, that Christ is not the only Source and Cause of eternal Felicity; for I acknowledg there is no other Name under Heaven, by which Men can hope for Salvation. But I may very well believe withal, that there are secret and wonderful ways, by which God may be pleas'd to apply his Merits to Mankind, besides those direct, open, and ordinary ones of Baptism and Confession: which I have only advanc'd briefly in this place, being a matter that will require a more ample and particular Examination. Now concerning the Salvation of all sorts of Christians, except their Lives disagree from their Doctrines (which is likewise a Disobedience to their Reason) I know not why I should be terrify'd out of my Charity by any *Anathema* whatsoever, that shall proceed from the mouth of Man. For I cannot see how any but God himself can certainly know that any Man is an Heretick, since it is only he who can discern by what close and unlawful means he corrupts his Understanding, and hardens his own Will to the obstinate Belief of any Error; for without that Obstinacy there is no Heresy, and without the perfect sight of the whole Contexture of a man's Thoughts and Actions, there is no knowledg of such an Obstinacy: and therefore when the Church declares any Opinion to be Heresy, it is to be accepted as if the Law should say, *Whosoever kills a Man is a Murderer*; which is a Sentence not absolute, but to be qualify'd with Circumstances. Even so the Church pronounces, *Whosoever holds this Doctrine is an Heretick*; with an evident Reservations of some Circumstances in the meaning thereof: for no man can imagine that the Sentence includes those who never shall hear of it; nor no more, say I, those, who tho they hear of it, yet cannot by any means bring their Conscience to the assent. For to obey in matters of Belief, without being able to believe the thing commanded, is no less, and seems more a Contradiction, than simply to obey without knowledg of a Command.

Thus much briefly concerning Heresy, which indeed is a Subject worthy a Treatise by it self. But this will not suffice, unless we can also clear our selves from the Imputation of Schism, the ordinary railing Word in all Controversies, and a Slander which is often fatal in making, where it falls accuses a Separation: of which they are truly guilty (the Word it self bearing witness against them) who break the precious Unity of the Christian Church; but that is done not so much by them who differ in Opinions, as by them who will not allow of such a Difference. Who knows, whether that God, who liked best that no mens Bodies should have the same Complexion, no mens Faces the same Figures, no Hands the same
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Lines, no Voices the same Sounds ; nay, not so much, but their Motions and Gestures should be distinguishable ; has not likewise best pleas'd himself with no less variety in the Parts of Men that are immaterial, and even in the most immaterial Actions of those Parts, which is the Worship and Adoration of a Deity ? Does God gain any thing by our Devotions ? Does he receive Hurt from one kind of Worship, and Advantage by another ? Is he pleas'd with any Smell in the Sacrifice, besides that of Obedience ? And can a plain, uniform, unalterable Obedience be expected, without Commands of the same nature ? Without doubt, he who gave Rules which might accept of so many several Interpretations, when he might have made them as plain to all in one sense, as they seem now to every Man in his own, is likewise well contented, that they shall be interpreted severally. And as the Divines confess, that the same words of Scripture admit of a literal, typical, anagogical Sense, and that all those Senses are both true and intended by the Holy Ghost, that Spirit of Unity that writ them ; so, I say, the Commands of God concerning Religion are equally obey'd and fulfil'd by all the various kinds of Obedience, which the Consciences of Men conceive themselves bound to pay unto them. As well the Mud by growing hard, as the Wax by melting, obeys the Sun ; nor is it less glorify'd by one than by the other : nor are those Diversities of Powers in the Sun, but of Capabilities in the Object that receives him. Even so Faith is still properly one, tho according to the diverse Receptions of it, it produce not only diverse, but contrary Effects. It is not unobservable, that the Unity of the Church of God is compar'd not to the Unity of one Man, but of a Man and Woman join'd in marriage : so the Church in general is one with Christ ; so the Church Militant with the Triumphant ; and so every particular Man with the Church Militant. Now this Unity is of one part more weak, more infirm, more ignoble than the other ; and the Female Part in the Similitude, is the erring Part in the Church it self ; and as that by the Bond of Love, so this by the Bond of Charity, is to be accounted one and the same with the other. Can any thing be more irrational, than to say, that a Foot when it hath the Gout, or a Hand when it shakes with the Palsy, or a Head when it akes, ceases to be a Part of the Body ? Sound or sick, great or little, well or ill shap'd, are outward Considerations to the Nature of a Member ; if it be inform'd by the same Soul, it requires no other Condition to make it such : Nor can you make this Soul, which is requir'd of such necessity to give it Life, to be a full and intire Agreement in all Points of Faith, of one Member

Member with another ; for then in matters of Belief, you make no distinction betwixt Sickness and Death, and the least Indisposition of Health is a total Corruption. Men of the contrary Opinion (I foresee) cannot chuse but say here, that in dangerous and infectious Diseases they cut off the affected Member to save the rest ; and that he who in a Gangrene spares the Patient, is the most hard-hearted and unmerciful Physician. And truly, if Errors in Belief draw so ill a Tail after them as the Devils and Damnation ; if they be to be esteem'd Gangrenes, as well in respect of their Mortality, as their spreading and infectious Nature ; not only Prudence, but Charity it self will put a Sword into our hands to cut them off. But alas ! these Diseases are not so deadly, as the Physicians of the Soul would make them, for the exalting of their own Reputation ; and he that would presently lop off an Arm, if the Gangrene be moving in it, would not, I hope, prescribe the same Remedy, if it be but infected with an Itch : both Evils would extend themselves over the whole Body, but the one to the perpetual Destruction of the Being, the other only to the temporary Loss of the Beauty and Quiet of it : and therefore we rather patiently endure the Trouble and Vexation of continual Scratching (which is the true Metaphor for the Controversies of Ecclesiastical Writers) with the Loathsomeness and Deformity of so many sorts, than take away a Member which may possibly hereafter recover its former Health and Comeliness, and is even now, without them, of great and necessary Uses to the whole Body.

Now as for those Men, who accuse us of Pride and Vanity, for attributing so much to our own Reason, making Presumption and Self-flattery the Fountain of this Opinion ; it is a Scandal so false, and so ridiculous, that without much Humility I should disdain to answer it. Are those to be accounted proud and tyrannical, who being govern'd by their own Reason, are content that all others should enjoy the same liberty ; or those, who whilst they deny that they themselves are ruled by their own Understandings, would nevertheless have all others submit to it ? Is it the Voice of Pride, to acknowledg, that they who differ from me may possibly be in the right ; or if they mistake, may do it without ruin ; or to say, whosoever is not of my opinion, is in the wrong ; and whosoever lies in the wrong, is eternally to perish for his Error ? It is the custom of Presumption, to be ready to lay down an Opinion once entertain'd (which is almost as great a Martyrdom, as laying down our Lives for the Truth's sake) when cause shall appear for so doing, or by claiming to our selves the Infallibility of our Party (for he is infallible himself

self who agrees with them that are so) to harden our selves into a necessary Opiniatreté.

These are the common Objections against this good-natur'd and gentle Doctrine : But Mr. *Hobbs*, according to his extraordinary Wit, has found out an odd and extraordinary Argument. For in his first Chapter of Religion, in the state of God's natural Empire, making every City the supreme Judge in matters that belong to God's Worship, and to which we ought to render an intire Obedience, says thus : ' Other-
' wise all absurd Opinions of the Nature of God, and all ri-
' diculous Ceremonies which have been admitted by any Na-
' tions, would be seen at once in the same City ; by which it
' would happen, that every particular Person
' would believe all others to * blaspheme, or * *Contumelia*
' irreverently to behave himself towards God : *afficere.*
' so that it could be said of no Man, that he
' worship'd God ; because no Man worships God (that is, ho-
' nours him externally) but he who does those things by which
' he may appear to others to honour him.

But methinks, if this be true, the several unappealable Tribunals, which are set up by Mr. *Hobbs* in several Cities or Commonwealths, are as well destroy'd by it, as those which are plac'd by us in every man's Breast. For several Cities appointing several kinds of Worship or Honour, consisting in the Opinion not of the Worshipper or Honourer himself, but of the Witnesses and Spectators of the Worship or Honour ; now if he say, that when a whole Commonwealth has but one sort of Worship, none will be Witnesses or Spectators of it, but those who believe it honourable ; first, as much Scandal from the Report, as from the sight of it : and besides, the same I say will happen, if there were an hundred Religions in one City ; for still their Religious Congregations were to be made up of Men of the same Opinions. Again, those who deny that a Commonwealth ought to enforce an Unity of Worship upon all its Subjects, will likewise as much deny, that Men ought to think those Worships dishonourable which are not practis'd by themselves : and if he say, there is no hindering of this latter, he must needs pardon me, if I cannot believe that impossible, which has been in the world (even in a more ridiculous variety than is at present, at least in our parts) for so many Ages, and which is now exercis'd in some places. And if ignorant or malicious Physicians in this violent Fever, did not apply new Heats instead of Julips, they might by writing, disputing, preaching, living charitably (which is all the former) reduce the World in a short time to its antient, healthful, and natural Temper. Lastly (to strike
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at the root of this Argument) it is false, that the Worship or Honour of God consists in the Opinion of others; if it did, Idolatry for four thousand years, had been the best, nay, the only Religion: and if I were now in the South Continent (where I suppose I should be the only Christian) I ought not to abstain from the Christian Worship of God (no, nor to hide or disguise it), for fear lest the Wonder, Contempt, and Mockery of Infidels, should on a sudden (I know not how) convert it into Sin and Blasphemy. True it is, that in Honour paid from Men to Men, Custom, Consent, and Acknowledgment, makes up the business; and an Honour contrary to the use of the place is counted an Affront, as to put off the Hat would be in the East, and in the West to keep it on before Princes. But the reason of this is, because Men who are not able to search into the Hearts, must be govern'd in their Judgment of them by the exterior Actions; and the Measure or Standard of those is Custom, but with God it is quite otherwise: He beholds and judges the very Thoughts of Man, which are the Fountains of his Actions, so much more fully and plainly, than we do the Actions themselves; that he needs not make a second, a mediate, a syllogistical Judgment of the Reality of Mens Worship, from the external, circumstantial, and only probable Testimonies of their outward Behaviours. And truly, if we put the case amongst Men, methinks a great *Roman* Emperor, that calls himself Master of the World, should delight to prove himself to be so, from the Variety of Homages, Tribute and Worship, which he receives from several Nations; and no more refuse to be honour'd in several fashions, than he would to be prais'd in several Languages. He would be glad perhaps to establish the *Latin* Tongue, and make that the Speech of all Countries; but finding that Design to be impossible, would at least pardon that Diversity, which agrees and consents in his own Glory. Truly if Men could cast away so much Passion, as to make but true Comparisons, they would find no more hurt from the Use of different Ceremonies, than of different Tongues in the same City; and we might be as well allow'd to serve God after the *English* manner, as to speak *English* in the *Spanish* Dominions. As Words are the Images of our Thoughts, so our Thoughts are of the things themselves: and as well may differing Thoughts truly, represent the Worship of one God, and of his Son Christ Jesus, as differing Words can represent the same Thought. And this the *Roman* Church seems to acknowledg, which does not think sufficient Unity in God's Service to be retain'd, with the allowance of more than of one Language; and for Preservation of fantastical Identity, teaches her Sons first to think,

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and afterwards to speak they know not what. They say first, *Our Error is the same with that of the Greeks, which is tax'd by St. Paul to the Corinthians: That they sought after Wisdom, but that the World by Wisdom knew not God: That the Wisdom of the Wise was destroy'd, and the Understanding of the Prudent brought to nothing: That it was made Foolishness; nay it was confounded by the foolish things of the World.* And against this Wisdom, many excellent things are spoken in the beginning of that Epistle; and it is stricken down (as *St. Paul* was himself) by a greater Light of Divine Truth, which came from God for that very purpose, to amaze and confound it first, and then to convert it. But if we mark it well, we shall observe, that under this Name of *Wisdom*, which is arraign'd, condemn'd, nay, and executed here (for it is brought to nothing) is not signify'd *Human Reason*; but that which among the *Greeks* at that time was falsely and blindly esteem'd to be so: As in the Laws against Magick, not that which is truly, but that which is falsely call'd so, is only condemn'd. And therefore *St. Paul* names it the *Wisdom of Words*; the *enticing Words of Man's Wisdom*; and the *Wisdom after the Flesh*; and the *Wisdom of the Princes of the World*. By which three Names are plainly (methinks) describ'd the three great Suborners and Corrupters of *Human Reason* (and not at all it self) the Desire of Reputation, of Pleasure, and Profit. By the first we forsake the Truth, to make Demonstrations of our Wit and Eloquence: By the second to compass those carnal and worldly Pleasures, which our own true Reason does not allow of, and therefore we will not allow of it, (as *Henry the Eighth* seems to have left the Pope, because he refus'd to dispense with his Lusts, and to call that Matrimony, which was indeed Adultery:) And by the third to comply with the Interest of States and Princes, and either willingly deceiving our selves with the Errors of our Governours, or deceiving others with a Desire to govern them. And these three (at least the two latter) Causes of Error in the Understanding, may be the Reason contain'd with Truth in the Parable concerning which is strongest. That that which falsely seem'd to be *Human Reason*, and not that which truly is so, is accus'd by *St. Paul*, appears yet more plainly, where he says, that *God hath chosen the things which are not, to confound the things which are: where the things which are not, can signify nothing else, but the things which are esteem'd as nothing, that is, neither of value in themselves, nor of power to produce any Effects.* True it is, that the best and truest *Human Reason* could not have found out of it self, that *Wisdom of God in a Mystery, even that hidden Wisdom which God ordain'd before the World, which is the Mystery of Christ Jesus*; but it was necessary it should first be reveal'd

reveal'd by that Spirit, which can only search and discover the deep things of God. But as soon as the Spirit had reveal'd it (which it did by Miracles, by fulfilling of Prophecies, and many other means of Power and Demonstration) even *Human Reason* was able to behold and to confess it; not that Grace had alter'd the Eye-sight of *Human Reason*, but that it had drawn the Object nearer to it. And till the Object was brought so nigh, the Wisdom of Man did as safely not discern it, as it does not now the new State of things, which shall be reveal'd at the second coming. And whereas they oppose against this the Saying of the Apostle, that *the natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discern'd*: The word Natural, I take to be a very ill Translation, and conceive it ought to be render'd *the sensual Man*, for such *ψυχικός* in the Greek, and *Animalis* in the Latin; *ψυχικός* many times signifying the lower and sensitive part of the Soul, in distinction to *νούς*, which is the upper or rational, as *Anima* is oppos'd to *Animus*, and both sometimes to *Mens*. So that the meaning is, that whilst a Man's Reason is seduc'd by his Appetites and Passions, it is an unfit Judg of Spiritual Matters, neither can be Umpire for a Peace, having join'd it self to the Party of those things, which are in perpetual Warfare against the Spirit. But they say this Authority which we ascribe to Reason, is strangely different from that *Captivity*, which St. Paul subjects it to, when he says, *Casting down Reasonings, and every high thing that exalts it self against the Knowledge of God, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ*. And what *Captivity*, say they, can there be, whilst we are only guided by the Motions of our own Understanding? All which signifies no more, but that St. Paul relates (in vindication of his own just Greatness, against the Calumnies of some that despis'd his Person, especially as weak and rude of Speech) how he had confuted those Persons that oppos'd themselves by Reasonings against the Doctrine of Christ; and whereas their Understandings before were enslav'd and captivated to the Desires of the sensual Soul (for which he calls them in another place, *Beasts at Ephesus*) which hinder'd them from the Obedience of Christ, he freed them from their cruel Bondage, by casting down all their Strong Holds, and breaking the Chains of their fallacious Reasonings, and brought them into another *Captivity* by Right of Conquest, but such an one where the Yokes are light and the Burdens easy; that is, by true Reason he overcame and captivated their false ones.

And from this Example, I desire those who would have our Understandings captivated, to convince us first by theirs, that they

they ought to be so, and not to think to inflave our Reasons, till they first overcome them: which when they have done, then they will lose what they contended for. For by our Reason's being guided, conquer'd, and inflav'd, theirs are become Guides, Conquerors, and Masters. So that it will appear at last impossible for *Human Reason* to lose any thing in one place, without gaining as much in some other.

They who follow the Apprehension of a Vision or Revelation extrinsecally coming into their Souls, if it happen that that extrinsecal Light come from the *Father of Lights*, as the Pillar of Fire did which led the *Israelites*, they must needs be guided rightly; but if it chance to be an *Ignis fatuus* (a Flame driven about, as Men commonly believe, by malicious Spirits) the Errors which it leads them into become unpardonable: for what Plea can they make for Mercy, since there is no Command, nor no Counsel can be alleg'd for the trusting of themselves to that Stranger, which they can neither know from whence he comes, nor whither he designs to go? The like happens if we obey Authority: For if that Authority prescribe Truth, we have good fortune in our Obedience, and merely good fortune; but if it draw us into Errors, we have nothing to say for our excuse, because we have nothing to alleg for our Obedience to that Authority: So *Eve* pleaded the Authority of the Serpent, but both were punish'd: So *Adam*, with more appearance of Innocency, *the Woman that thou gavest me for an Helper bid me eat*, and accordingly I did; but to him too a Curse is pronounc'd, because he believ'd that which was figuratively one with him (as Members of the Church pretend to do the Church) rather than that which was most certainly and singly one with him, which was his own Reason. Thus the best that can be made of these mens Opinions is, that after they have blind-folded themselves, amongst the many doors where they may enter, there is one which will lead them to Heaven; which if they miss, it will be ask'd, not why you enter'd not there, but why by blinding your own Eyes did you put your self into a greater probability of not finding, than of lighting upon the true Passage. Now contrariwise, those who commit themselves to the Guidance of their own Understanding, if they do commit themselves wholly to it, are as safe on the left hand as on the right, as secure of Happiness in their Errors, as others are, who are otherwise guided, even in the Truths which they happen to fall into. For there is no danger of perishing, but from Disobedience, without which every Man may often err; the Commandment of God being not to find out Truth (especially every particular one) but to endeavour the finding it. He commands no more

but to *search, and ye shall find*, says he, not every particular Truth, for Experience teaches us that cannot be the Interpretation; but whether you find or no the Truth which you search for, you shall find the Reward of searching, which is Happiness. Now he that bids you search, is cruel and barbarous in his Mockery, if he knows you have no power or faculty so to search, as he commands you; there is therefore in a Man a natural Ability of searching spiritual Truths, and that can be nothing else but his Understanding: neither to any thing else can the Command be directed, since all things else are without us, and may serve for Helps and Directions in our Search, but cannot be our Search it self. Secondly, because we lay the blasphemous Accusation of Injustice upon God, if he punish us for an Error which we could not avoid; and all Errors are such which we fall into after a full and mature Search for the Truth, according to the best means represented to our Understanding. So that as the Liberty of our Will, and the Possibility we have of doing the contrary, makes us suffer justly for evil Actions; so the Possibility our Understanding had to have discover'd and entertain'd the Truth, renders us liable to Condemnation for ill Beliefs. Thirdly, We ought not to believe Errors in Faith to be damnable, because this Opinion is so wildly uncharitable, that it strikes ten thousand Millions out of the Book of Life, for each single Name that it leaves in it: so immeasurably vast (if we consider the whole World and all the Ages of it) is the number of those who have lived and died in great, high, and manifest Errors (manifest I mean to us, for they were not so to them) above those that have been so happy as to find and to embrace the Truth. Fourthly, We ought not to teach Men, that any Errors in Belief overthrow our Hopes of Salvation, unless we could likewise give them a Catalogue of those Errors which do so; it being confess'd that all do not, because these must necessarily put all considering Men into a doubt, or rather despair of their own Salvation: for what Quiet or Repose can our Conscience take, whilst we know our selves to be in many Errors (the Estate of a Traveller being incapable of an Exemption from them) and believe that some Errors, without knowing which or how many, do exclude Men from a Possibility of entering into Heaven? Fifthly, Because in this case we cannot know our Fault, and therefore have no means of repenting of it. Now God enjoining men Repentance, and promising Pardon thereupon for all Sins whatsoever, prescribes such a Physick as is impossible to be taken; for Repentance presupposes knowledg of the Fault, and knowledg of a Fault does not consist with an Error of the Understanding, for we cannot

cannot apprehend the thing so, and yet be sorry that we are mistaken. Sixthly, The great probability and appearance of Truth on all sides, even the erring ones, ought to make us believe, that God will not punish those who err. If that be probable, which all, or most Men, or many, or the most wise, or some wise Men receive for Truth; What Doctrine is there, which in the whole Compass of Religions may not pass for probable, and what cause have we to condemn the Understanding of any Man, in a thing which he is drawn by Probabilities to assent to? I cannot possibly conceive it agreeable to the Goodness of the Divine Nature, so to have hidden and involv'd, and almost disguis'd the Truth from us, if he had intended to have censur'd the missing of it, with so heavy a Sentence as that of eternal Ruin; especially seeing there is but one true way for an hundred false ones, and no certain Mark set upon the Entry of that one, to distinguish it from the others. And let this suffice to be said upon the first Argument, to induce us to commit our selves wholly to our Reason in the search of Divine and Religious Verities, which is drawn from the certainty of Safety this way, and the great hazard of it any other.

Secondly, As in visible Objects we receive confidently, and rest in the Report of the Sight, because Nature hath ordain'd and accommodated it accordingly for that purpose, without Appeal from it either to other Senses, or to Revelations, or the Eyes of other Men: and as we do the like in all other Operations of the Sense, and all other Faculties of the Soul; so ought we as intirely and absolutely to resign our Belief to the Dictates of our own Understanding in things intelligible, which are as properly and naturally the Object thereof, as things visible are of the Eye-sight. And we might as well say, we will trust our Eyes in green, and white and black, but not in red or yellow Colours, as affirm that our Reason must guide us in the Contemplation of Nature, the Search of Arts, the Government of publick Societies, and the Regulation of mens Lives, as far as the Bounds of Morality; but that it is not at all to be follow'd or obey'd in matters that concern Religion: those too being intelligible Truths, yea the chief, and therefore most to be search'd, and a part of the Understanding's Object as much or rather more than any other. Now as the Credit of the Sight is not at all to be disparag'd, because some Men have the Jaundice, which paints every thing yellow; some look thro blue Spectacles, which represent all things to them under the same colour; and some thro divers Mediums, which make the streight Staff appear crooked; some are short-sighted, and take Men for Trees at a distance: so, I say, the

Mistakes which Reason, by accidental Disturbances, lead some Men into, is not a sufficient Argument for others to refuse to be guided by it,

If it be objected, that the Sight, tho it be subject to some particular Impediments, yet is generally by its own nature much more certain and exact in the Judgment of Colours, than the Understanding can ever be made (even without accidental hindrances) in the knowledg of things spiritual: I answer, That if such things be the proper Object of such a Faculty, we are herein to be govern'd by the Dictates of it, without considering whether that Faculty be as quick and perfect as God could make it in apprehension of its Object; neither ought we to give less trust to our Understanding in supernatural Truths, because it is so much inferiour to that of Angels, than we do to our Eye-sight in things visible, tho it be so far short of that of Eagles. Certainly they who remove the cognizance of Divine Truths out of the Court of Reason, take away that which most properly and naturally falls under its Determination. For when God had created all things else, he thought the World imperfect as yet, whilst there was nothing made that could contemplate, thank, and worship the Maker of it; and therefore he created Man: And this was the chief End of the Production of a rational Soul, that by it they might consider the things which they saw, and discourse and collect out of them the things which they saw not, and both praise and love the Maker for and in them both; which is the whole Substance of Religion, for the Manners and Kinds of doing it are accidental. So then Religion appears to be the principal End of Man's Creation; and therefore as if Horses be made for Burden, they have a natural Ability given them wherewith to do it; if Birds do fly, they have a Faculty and Wings given them for that purpose (because where an End is natural, the Means are so too) so if Religion be the End of Man as he is Partaker of a rational Soul, that reasonable Soul hath some Power naturally plac'd in it for the Exercise, Judgment, and Choice of Religion, as far forth as is necessary to his own Happiness, that is, to the attain'd End for which he was created.

In the third place, This Opinion is not only most safe, and most natural for every Man in particular, but likewise most agreeable to the Good and Interest of Human Society: for all Wars of late Ages have been either really for Religion, or at least that has been one of the chief Pretences; which if it were quite taken away, it would be difficult for those men who disguise their Ambition with it, to draw the People into the Miseries and Uncertainties either of a Civil
or

or Foreign War. Now if this Doctrine were generally planted in the Minds of Men, both the Reality and Pretence of fighting for Religion were utterly cancel'd; and tho' turbulent Minds would then either find or make some other occasion to disturb their Neighbours, yet the Ill would neither be so frequent nor so cruel as it is at present. For who would quarrel for Religion, when this were made the main and general ground of all Religions, *That every Man ought quietly to enjoy his own?* True it is, That Unity in Religion would produce the same Effect; but alas! both Reason and Experience teaches us, that the Hopes of that are vain and impossible; and tho' a State may sometimes force all its Subjects to submit to an outward Uniformity in all things that concern Divine Worship, yet they must know, that every publick Disturbance in the Commonwealth breaks all those Bonds asunder of dissembled Obedience, and that such Compulsions both beget and ripen all Disorders.

Much might be spoken in this matter, but not necessarily here, both because I have said something of it before, in answering this Argument turn'd against this Opinion unhappily; and because the manner of establishing this Liberty in a Commonwealth, will require a Discourse intirely by it self.

The last Defence of this Cause, and which indeed needs not the Assistance of any other, shall be, because (tho' Men deceive themselves herein, and as it often happens, know not their own Opinions) it is impossible that ever any man should have been, is, or can hereafter be guided by any thing else but his own *Reason*, as in other things, so also in matters of Religion; I say impossible, for whatsoever way we take, we shall find that the last Anchor to which our Faith holds, the last Element into which it is resolv'd (and therefore it is likewise compounded of the same) is only *Reason*. For when I ask, why you believe any Mystery of Faith? you will answer perhaps, Because the present Church commands you. If I proceed and ask, Why do you believe what the present Church commands? You will say, Because the former Church teaches the same. Why do you believe the former Church? Because God commands you so to do. Why do you believe that God commands it? Because you find it in the Scripture. Why do you believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God? Because they were confirm'd by Miracles. Why do Miracles confirm that? Because they are Works which can proceed from nothing but the absolute and immediate Power of the Deity. Why so? Because nothing contrary to, or above the Course of Nature, can be done by natural Agents; but Mi-
racles

racles are Effects contrary to, or above the Course of Nature; therefore they proceed from the Divine Operation. Thus you see Faith at last resolv'd into a Syllogism, which is the proper Work of the Understanding. On the other hand, if I demand, Why you do believe that any Miracles were done for the Confirmation of the Faith? Because of the great and many Testimonies of the Truth thereof. Why do you believe those Testimonies? Because so many Persons in so several Times and Places, with so several Interests, could never agree in being deceiv'd, or to deceive. So that you rest not at all in any Authority, but discourse first what may be said for or against the Validity of it, examine it punctually in all Circumstances, and at last submit to it upon some Syllogism, which is the only Law that binds our Reason. Two things are to be consider'd in all Authority, before we obey or believe it; first, The Condition and Quality of the Persons who command or instruct; and secondly, The true Interpretation of their Commands or Instructions. For the first, The Persons in commanding must have a lawful Power deriv'd to them, either from God, Nature, or Custom (which latter depends upon the two former) and in instructing, must have either an absolute Infallibility, or else at least a Probability of not erring. So that no Authority is obeyable or believable in it self, without farther examination, no not that of God himself; for the Strength of God's Authority depends upon that Syllogism, which proves that the Nature of God is such, that he can neither deceive, nor be deceiv'd. Now all this Examination is purely and intirely the Work of our Reason, by measuring a Particular and an Universal. Whatsoever hath such Conditions, is to be obey'd or believ'd; but such Person or Persons have such Conditions, therefore such Person or Persons are to be obey'd or believ'd. Neither does our Reason only prescribe Obedience and Belief to us, but also searches and establishes the Bounds of both, setting up some solid and apparent Notions, by which we know our *Ne plus ultra*. True it is, that some men obey, and some men believe, without considering that they make this Discourse; but that is only from Inadvertency, as men often move their Bodies, without any particular exerted Thought of doing so.

Thus far then Authority wholly depends upon Reason. And much more in the second Condition, which is the Interpretation of it: in which business the Interposition of Reason is so necessary, that I shall omit either to prove or illustrate the Point.

Now

Now as they who enslave themselves to Authority, make it the Rule and Guide of Faith, because that even the Belief that Scripture is the Law of God depends upon it, as truly it does (in my Opinion) upon the Tradition of Miracles; so I say, that much rather Reason is to be accounted that Rule and that Guide we look for, because even Authority, upon which even Scripture it self depends, depends as much upon that: neither do we more believe the Scripture for Authority, than that very Authority for the Reason we think we have to do so. The Samaritan says, I have an infallible Rule, which is the Books of Moses, and only them. The Jew says, I cannot err, for I follow the Old Testament, which is infallible, and only that. The Christian assures himself of the Truth, as long as he is guided by the Evangelists and Apostles, whose Writings are the infallible Dictates of the Holy Ghost. The Turk assumes the same from the *Alcoran*; and the Heathen from Oracles, *Sybil's* Books, and the like. What shall I do? None of all these Books can be believ'd by their own Light, for there are things equally strange in them all. Follow the Authority of the Church, which cannot misguide you? Most willingly. But again the same difficulty returns in another habit: for as every one cries, I follow these Books which are infallible; so he goes on too and says, I believe these Books to be so, because our Church and our Traditions, which are certainly the best Authority, assure us that they were written by Divine Inspiration. Let the Christian take heed of saying here, *But my Tradition is more antient and more universal*; for in the first the Jew will overcome him, and in both the Heathen. I must in this diversity of ways either stand still, that is, suspend absolutely from the Belief of any Religion (which is almost impossible, after the Belief that there is a God) or I must chuse out of these. Now Election is a Work so proper to Reason, that it cannot be done by any thing else; and therefore to be brought to a necessity of an Election, is to be necessarily brought to submit in matters of Religion to the Determination of our Understanding. So that in matters of Religion, wherein there is a difference, I chuse this side rather than the other, because my Reason bids me: and where there is no difference, even there I am wholly guided by my Reason, because the uncontradicted Concurrence of the Parties, makes up a Syllogism to persuade (I say to persuade only) my Belief. Briefly, I cannot believe but by an Act of the Will, nor can I will but according to the Directions of the Understanding: so that

they who say they follow Authority, or they follow Divine particular Revelation, or any thing else imaginable, do it because that agrees with their own Reason, and will quit the Party as soon as it does otherwise.



F I N I S.